

The torture of sign waving



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Andre LongENGWR 300Mon-Wed 1900February 11, 2008The Torture of Sign WavingEver listen to motivational speeches on the radio Are you down on your luck with no income Need something to get your life going again by doing something constructive Here is a possibility, become a sign waver, that??™s right point big colorful arrows at apartment complexes.

Earn money on the weekends. Little did I know these types of advertisements were like a lure to hook a fish. My life as a signing professional began as a way to kill time, until a real job came along that kept food in my mouth. I was not completely overwhelmed with excitement while pondering the possibility, no one says I want to grow up and hold signs on a street conner, after all a job is a means to an end. For this particular occupation, as banally as it seems on the surface, comes with many hidden anxieties, chief among which is boredom. Whether in the city or countryside plain old boredom plays a major role in the life of a sign bearer. I was on a lonely road once with two lanes, no immediate civilization near me, weaving my sign. I look in front of me, there are no cars in sight, and the same surroundings are all around me.

There are no birds chirping, no dogs barking or any other familiar sounds. There are beautiful trees with the smell of pine needles in the air. My function is to twirl my sign to attract public attention, which I do vigorously. With no audience I perform all my tricks by flipping the arrow behind my back, throwing it up ten feet in the air and moving around it as if I were doing the Maypole dance. My sacrifice does not bear fruit, as the salesperson asks me not to return because no units were sold. Now I am off to another

jobsite with the same enthusiasm. There are more people in the vicinity and I watch cars go back and forth.

Working my corner I stand in the same spot for hours and hours, trying to ignore my aching feet. When I begin work in the morning I stare at the same gas station, the same Taco Bell, the same run down furniture store all day until the end of my shift. The buildings lean side ways as my mind plays tricks on me. I wish for a change of in this monotonous routine. Finally it is launch break and I must decide what to do with myself. Most of the time I have no money and I sit and look at the clouds on the curve of the side walk. This is the shortest part of the work day, time zooms by so fast I feel like I did not have a break at all, with no comfortable place to sit down, I move around a lot to avoid getting blisters. This is an outdoor job so I am able to stretch when needed.

Sometimes I can perform lightweight exercise, but the most exercise I get is by moving the sign all day, making it move up and down, side to side and around and around. A full day of this constant motion and anyone??™s arms would get tired. Every thirty to forty-five minutes I have to take a quick break. At this new location people are beginning to take notice as I put on my fake plastic smile. Vehicles will stop by and the passengers inside will ask to see me flip the big arrow in the air and catch it behind my back as they crank up their car stereo. You may think listening to music would be a good idea. In reality this is where you experience first hand that many radio stations don??™t have real DJ??™s any more. Most of their songs that are played come from an automated play list, which repeat the same set of songs over and over all day long.

You will become so acquainted with this system that you can predict the order of the songs that will play and a rough time estimate of when they will play. The radio contributes to the same old routine. And that is assuming you can get reception at all.

At the first location mentioned where it was dead quite, my walkman radio only picked up static. At populated intersections many people are walking around and occasionally they come up to me. Every time I wonder what??™s coming The kids often make fun of me in my ridiculous Gilligan??™s hat. They drive past me yelling various imaginative names and ask the same old questions ??? How much does that job pay???, ??? How old do you have to be to do that job???, and of course ??? Aren??™t you bored???. Then there are the interesting local inhabitants who volunteer their common sense that all of the presidents we ever had were aliens in disguise. Also we are living in the last days and most of every taught thing to us about religion is false and hand you something to read. In my experience at this job there are a few ambitious people looking for a job, my job! I always tell them to contact the main office. My favorite people are the ones who simply ask for directions.

You may think that wouldn??™t be so bad in comparison, but they want directions on how to get back on the freeway. I would also like to mention another aspect of this occupation which is the enduring of the elements. I was outside during the last two major rain storms where I got soaking wet, waving my sign all day, wishing I could go to the bathroom. The wind constantly blowing the sign around, so cold my fingers were turning num, all in the name of getting someone??™s attention to buy a housing unit. Now I will also declare the rest of my uniform which include black slacks and a red

shirt (in the warmer months we also get a red bandana so we are officially pseudo gang bangers) which must show to the public.

This allows the wind to go through you. The most enjoyable part of this weekend gig is the ride on the way to and from the work site. This is when I can converse with Mike my immediate supervisor and Makala my coworker. Makala enjoys the complaining routine of a soon to be mother. She is always funny and sarcastic.

Last week she observed Mike receiving a leather jacket for the new motorcycle he just brought and made a comment about men in a mid life crises. Mike is the person who transports us and the signs. While we are on the corner working, drives around in an endless loop making sure we are alright, sometimes bringing water. When not driving he sits in his truck, trying not to fall asleep.